

VZCZCXYZ0012
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUL #2390/01 3470833
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 120833Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2612
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 5063
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 9123
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 5170
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG PRIORITY 3884
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
RUACAAA/COMUSKOREA INTEL SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMUSFK SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 002390

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2018
TAGS: [PROP](#) [PREL](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: NORTH KOREAN DEFECTOR UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION SEEKS
EMPOWERMENT AND CONSOLIDATION

REF: SEOUL 02285

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Poloffs met with leaders of the Association of North Korean Defector Organizations (ANKDO), an umbrella organization representing 28 smaller NGOs that support North Korean defectors. Chairman Han Chang-kweon said it would be important to empower the defector community, and stressed that defectors are best positioned to bring about change in North Korea after unification. His association and two of its member organizations have been involved in sending leaflets to North Korea in the past, but Han halted leaflet activity in October to abide by the current South Korean administration's wishes, especially when the wind direction was not favorable until the spring. Han criticized continuing leaflet activity in the current political atmosphere as counterproductive. END SUMMARY.

Founded to Coordinate and Strengthen Defector Community

¶2. (SBU) Han founded the Association of North Korean Defector Organizations (ANKDO) in March 2008 to coordinate activities of the North Korean defector community in South Korea. The Association has 28 South Korea-based member organizations, including the Association for Free North Koreans established 10 years ago, and U.S. member NGOs.

¶3. (SBU) Han said it would be important to empower and seek consensus from the defector community. Han also stressed that defectors are best positioned to bring about change in North Korea and should have a prominent voice in inter-Korean policy issues. The Association had the long-term goal of creating a grass roots democracy movement in North Korea and worked to assist refugees in third countries like China. Han believed his organization was beginning to gain momentum among defectors and recognition from the South Korean government.

Ultraconservatives' Push for Continued Leafleting?

¶4. (SBU) Han's association and two of its member organizations have been involved in sending leaflets to North Korea in the past. Han's association halted such activity in October and decided to abide by the current South Korean administration's wishes, for now, adding that the current wind condition was not favorable for sending leaflets to the North anyway. Even so, he offered a strong rationale for

leafletting.

15. (C) Han described the activities of Fighters For Free North Korea, primarily responsible for all the leaflet activities in North Korea after the ROKG October request to stop, as counterproductive and self-serving. Han said he was curious why Fighters For Free North Korea Chairman Park Sang-hak sought so much media attention when leaflets can be sent -- probably more effectively -- without publicity.

16. (C) While identifying ANKDO's political affiliation as "conservative," in line with the current ruling party, the Grand National Party (GNP), Han noted Park's close affiliation with the more conservative Liberty Forward Party (LFP) and several right wing groups. Han concluded ultraconservatives were behind Park's continued efforts to ignore the current administration's plea to stop leaflet activities, despite the fact that the wind was blowing the anti-Kim Jong-il, plastic leaflets to South Korean grain and fish farmers. Not only was Park wasting the money donated for leaflets intended for North Koreans, but he was also littering South Korean soil, Han commented.

ANKDO Leaflet: Newspaper, Not a Flyer

17. (SBU) Han noted that ANKDO's leaflets have no targeted audience in North Korea, but instead try to include content that appeals to all segments of the population. The leaflets originally concentrated on information regarding Kim Jong-il and his leadership, but, starting in June 2008, expanded to

include defector testimonies and the names of people involved in human rights abuses in North Korea. Han said that in the past North Koreans have viewed leaflets as foreign propaganda, but defector authorship in a familiar North Korean tone was changing that perception. Han said his Association would continue to draft the leaflets from a North Korean viewpoint, drawing on their own experiences as defectors.

Leaflets More Effective than DVD or Radio

18. (SBU) Han said that a minority of people in North Korea have access to radios, DVDs, and DVD players, but that leaflets are easily accessible. He said that leaflets are difficult for the government to hide and information spreads rapidly in North Korea by word of mouth. Military and security services ordered by the government to collect the leaflets may read them out of curiosity. Han added that leaflets are less risky than radios and DVDs because citizens with leaflets can claim they found them and were in the process of turning them in to authorities.

Biographical Information

19. (C) ANKDO Chairman Han Chang-kweon completed his training as a traditional medicine doctor and left North Korea in 1992 to work in the Soviet Union. He defected and arrived in South Korea in 1994. Having been arrested several times in the past ten years under liberal presidents for his anti-North Korea activities, Han is looking forward to expanding his influence and activities under the current, conservative, Lee administration. Han also spent time in an Arizona jail after having tried to claim asylum in the U.S. He did not elaborate on his reasons for going to the U.S.

110. (C) Han's deputy, Son Jung-hun, defected in 1998, following his older brother, Son Jong-nam, whose case was mentioned in the Department's 2006 and 2007 Human Rights Reports. Son Jong-nam was arrested by the Chinese authorities for preaching to North Korean defectors and was repatriated to North Korea in 2001. He was then sentenced to

a political prison camp in North Hamyeong province and is rumored to have been executed. The younger Son arrived in South Korea in 2002 and currently serves as the ANKDO Secretary General.
STEPHENS